

An Examination of Ohio State Student Perceptions of Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to examine the perceptions and stigma of sex trafficking survivors among undergraduate and graduate college students at the Ohio State University Main Campus, and to explore possible reasons for bias toward survivors. Another goal of this study was to uncover the extent to which survivors are blamed for their experience by students. The findings of the study indicate potential interventions for reducing stigma and bias through education and awareness.

Student perceptions of sex trafficking were assessed utilizing an online survey. The sample population consisted of students attending the Ohio State University who were of age eighteen years or older, and the survey included a preexisting scale developed by Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson (2016) to measure the perceptions of participants towards sex trafficking. Overall, the survey featured both extended response questions and multiple choice questions, and 65 participant responses were recorded. The data from each of the surveys was analyzed using a quantitative approach. Multiple choice questions were encoded and examined through quantitative methods, and extended response questions were used to interpret the results of the qualitative data. Analysis of the data was primarily of descriptive nature, though a few demographic variables were examined for correlation in regards to bias against survivors.

The results of the survey proved to be significant. Almost all of the participants felt that they had knowledge of sex trafficking and were aware of sex trafficking as a social issue. The majority of participants also indicated that they felt they had the ability to make an impact in combatting sex trafficking. More variance was found in participant attitudes toward helping sex trafficking survivors, attitudes toward trafficking survivors' ability to leave their situation, and

emotional response to trafficking. Responses to sex trafficking survivors varied based on the college participants were enrolled in within Ohio State as well. Based on this study, future research into stigma and bias in diverse collegiate populations around the country is recommended to provide even more awareness as to stigma and bias surrounding sex trafficking. Continued research and analysis will serve to increase student awareness, education and knowledge around sex trafficking and indirectly aid sex trafficking survivors through a decrease in stigma and discrimination and an increase in public awareness and education.

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Introduction

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking, as defined by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, is the act of forcing a person to engage in labor or sexual activities against their will through coercion, force, and control (Polaris Project, 2018). Human trafficking - both for labor and for the sex industry - is present around the world. While this modern form of slavery is widely known to be present in third world countries, it is also prevalent among first world countries such as the United States. According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center's (NHTRC's) 2017 Annual Report, 8,759 trafficking cases were reported in the United States alone, with 1,274 (14.55%) of those being labor trafficking cases, 6,244 (71.29%) being potential sex trafficking cases, and 390 (4.45%) being labor and sex trafficking cases (851 or 9.72% of cases were not specified as to the type of trafficking). Human trafficking is also especially prevalent in Ohio – most especially in Toledo and Columbus, as the both of these cities contain several highways that are major drug and trafficking routes. On the NHTRC's 2017 Annual Report, Ohio recorded the fourth highest amount of trafficking cases reported in any state, behind only California, Texas, and Florida.

Problem Statement

While much awareness has been raised in many states (including Ohio) for the existence of human trafficking (specifically sex trafficking), little research has been done about the impact of public opinion and perceptions on the experience of the survivors as they attempt to recover, and almost no information is available on the attitudes of the general public toward sex trafficking survivors. Some research has been done recently in international settings to

examine media framing and the opinion of the public about human trafficking, but those studies used qualitative methods and focused on the public perceptions of human trafficking as a social issue, not the public perception of survivors of human trafficking (Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson, 2016). This means that there is little information available about false perceptions, biases, and attitudes of others towards human trafficking survivors, and little information about widespread gaps in knowledge and/or awareness of the issue. Similarly, there has been almost no research performed to examine the attitudes of college students toward human trafficking survivors (Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson, 2016). Part of the problem in attempting to quantify mass perceptions and opinions is that there have been few scales developed that can accurately and quantitatively measure attitudes of a large population. Researchers Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson developed a scale in 2016 to measure attitudes of research participants toward sex trafficking survivors , but outside of their work there have been no other measures available to quantify the attitudes of large amounts of people about sex trafficking. Having the capability to measure the attitudes of people, specifically college students, would allow for the identification of overall knowledge and perceptions of sex trafficking survivors, and would give the opportunity to improve education and awareness campaigns to adequately address gaps in public knowledge and/or false perceptions (Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson).

Research Purpose

The aim of this project is to pin down the exact stigmas associated with sex trafficking victims, to explore the possible reasons why the people who survive sex trafficking might be viewed in this light, and to examine the extent to which the survivors are blamed for their

experiences. Another goal of this research is to gain an understanding of the stigma associated with sex trafficking victims, so that these stigmas can be combated in the future. Combating the stigmas associated with human trafficking victims could potentially allow for easier reintegration for the survivors and an elimination of some of the barriers that prevent them from recovering. Gaining knowledge about the perceptions can give the opportunity to improve current education and awareness campaigns in the campus area as well. These goals will be achieved through a survey utilized to explore the perceptions and opinions of college students at the Ohio State University (Columbus campus) about sex trafficking survivors.

Review of Literature

Prevalence of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking, which is a social issue widely known to be present in other parts of the world, is very much alive within the United States as well. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) has kept extensive statistics based on calls placed to their hotline to request support for survivors, to give a measure of the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States. The most recent statistics from the NHTRC come from their 2017 annual report of statistics based on received by their hotline. In 2017, 8759 cases of human trafficking were reported in the United States to the NHTRC (13% jump in human trafficking cases overall), with a breakdown of 2,409 sex trafficking cases, 1,072 sex and labor trafficking cases, and 485 reported cases of labor trafficking, (Polaris Project, 2018). Within those reported cases, there were an estimated 10,615 individual victims and 4,863 potential traffickers identified (Polaris Project, 2018). The top five risk factors for human trafficking identified by the NHTRC included recent migration or relocation, substance abuse, runaway or homeless youth, mental health

concerns, and involvement in the child welfare system (Polaris Project, 2018). The NHTRC also included the top five methods of coercion, force and fraud used by traffickers to control their victims within the United States as isolation (including confinement), emotional abuse, economic abuse, threats of any kind, and physical abuse (Polaris Project, 2018). But although the 2017 statistics from the NHTRC give some indication as to the extent of trafficking in the nation, they do not accurately represent the full scope of human trafficking within the United States, especially sex trafficking. The lack of awareness of trafficking in various regions of the country often result in the underreporting of trafficking cases. In addition to being present around the nation, human trafficking (and specifically sex trafficking) is also a major social issue even closer to home, as Ohio is one of the top states in the nation for human trafficking.

Within the United States, Ohio ranks among the top five states for human trafficking in the nation. On the NHTRC's 2017 Annual Report, Ohio recorded the fourth highest amount of sex trafficking cases reported in any state, behind only California, Texas, and Florida (Polaris Project, 2018). Based off of a 2010 report analyzing trafficking in the state, some factors that have allowed for the significant existence of sex trafficking within Ohio (especially with foreign-born victims) are the existence of markets for both sex and labor trafficking within the state (such as a sizeable agricultural market), a high demand for sex and labor services in the states surrounding Ohio, the presence of highways that are part of national drug trafficking routes in the state, and the presence of large populations of foreign-born individuals (Williamson et. Al, 2010). According to the NHTRC, in 2017, Ohio recorded 365 cases of reported trafficking (both for labor and for sex) (Polaris Project, 2018). The increase in reported trafficking cases in Ohio in the last five years has prompted response from social and political organizations, such as the

Salvation Army (which created an anti-trafficking department focused specifically on trafficking), as well as the governor John Kasich (who created the Ohio Governor's Human Trafficking Task Force, a task force focused onto coordinating efforts to both identify survivors and provide comprehensive recovery services to survivors across the state) (Smouse, 2010). As the amount of trafficking cases reported throughout Ohio continue to climb along with the media and public attention focused on trafficking, the perceptions of both the general public and the student population at Ohio State will become increasingly more influential in the recovery of survivors.

Experiences of Survivors

Survivors of human trafficking, once removed from their situation, go through an arduous process to reintegrate back into society and adjust to life outside of their trafficking experience. First, if the survivor is foreign-born and trafficked to another country, the survivor will may face legal problems related to their relocation, especially if their captors held any of their identification documents (Zimmerman and Stockl, 2012). Survivors of both sex and labor trafficking alike also suffer huge amounts of physical, mental, and emotional trauma, the extent of which depends on the length and intensity of their experience. Often the trauma to the survivor includes physical injury (sometimes to the point of death or near death) compounded with the psychological trauma and social consequences of being trafficked (Dahal et. Al, 2015). Outside of the trauma that survivors face, some other factors that tend to make reintegration into society very difficult for those released from trafficking include lack of a social support system, lack of familial ties, feeling ostracized by society, and learning to work in another profession to make a living (Dahal et. Al, 2015). Survivors often deal with intense persecution

from family and communities when trying to recover and reintegrate, and they will often choose not to share their experiences as a result (which can have a huge impact on their recovery (Gift, 2008). Survivors are often re-victimized through discrimination and persecution as they attempt to reintegrate into society as well, even by those from whom they are seeking help and services (such as doctors and workers at social service agencies). This is true for survivors both in cultures around the world but also survivors in Central Ohio and Columbus – survivors often do not seek out services out of fear of persecution and because they are not aware of the services that are available to them (Smouse, 2010). In summary, the perceptions held by the public in Central Ohio (including the student body at the Ohio State University, have a massive impact on sex trafficking survivors' reintegration back into society.

Outside of the survivor's own barriers to recovery and reintegration, there is often a lack of ability within the community to address the needs of survivors as they try to recover and reintegrate. Some barriers to addressing the social needs of survivors include the impact of trauma on all areas of the survivor's life, limited access to mental health resources, difficulty establishing relationships of trust with peers and providers, cultural and language barriers for foreign-born survivors, lack of peer support, and lack of access to trauma-specific services (Clawson et. al, 2007). Re-victimization (or the fear of it) often leads survivors not to seek help or speak out about their experiences. Many service providers are not informed or equipped to work with survivors, as survivors often have complex needs that require interdisciplinary care (Clawson et. Al, 2007). The same problems can be found in central Ohio – while many people, including service providers, are aware that sex trafficking is a social issue impacting the region, those providers often do not work with sex trafficking victims due to their complex needs (often

require interdisciplinary care) and a lack of knowledge about survivors and trauma (Smouse, 2010). Furthermore, many service providers in the Central Ohio area are not well educated on sex trafficking or trauma informed care, which can lead to them holding false perceptions and stigma (Clawson et. Al, 2007). These facts illustrate the need to combat stigma and false perceptions surrounding sex trafficking survivors to increase support for survivors, to increase education and awareness about sex trafficking.

Role of Perception

As previously mentioned, perceptions of the general public (and resulting stigma, bias and discrimination) play a massive role in the emotional toll and experience of survivors as they transition out of trafficking and back into society. The response of each survivor's family to the survivor's experience, based on the family's perceptions of trafficking, has significant impact on the recovery of the survivor as well (Gift, 2008). While recent research shows that there is knowledge in most cultures of the nature of trafficking and the fact that social and economic problems result in a vulnerability to trafficking for individuals, the blame for trafficking is still normally attributed to the character and immorality of the survivor (Gift, 2008). In some cultures, the entire family of the survivor were persecuted for the survivor's past, and many times survivors who returned to their previous living were considered likely to continue on as sex workers, likely to try to recruit other young women into sex work, and/or likely to be infected with HIV as a result of sex work (Gift, 2008.) In many cultures it is normal for survivors of trafficking who return either move away to continue as sex workers in a place where no one knows them or choose to hide their trafficking experiences out of fear of persecution and discrimination of both them and their families, both of which have negative impact on the

survivor's physical and psychological recovery (Gift, 2008). Prevention education – and the way that trafficking is portrayed within it – can also serve to influence negative views of trafficking within each society (Gift, 2008). Many survivors do not seek treatment or any sort of help in recovery as they sometimes face same discrimination from providers as they do from others within their community (Clawson et. Al, 2007). In short, fear of discrimination and negative perceptions play a significant role in the recovery of survivors, and often have very detrimental impact on their recovery and reintegration.

Studies on Public Opinion

Previous research exploring public opinion of human trafficking through primarily qualitative methods has been initiated in several other nations around the world. None of those studies focused on the stigma associated with human trafficking or sex trafficking specifically, but instead on the ways that public opinion was influenced by the media's portrayal of trafficking, public opinion as to whether or not the national governing body of the nation in question could actively address the issue of trafficking within the nation, or public opinion was to the scale and significance of human trafficking within the nation. For example, a study performed by Pajnik (2010) used qualitative means to examine the way that the Slovene media framed human trafficking and the ways that the media was influenced by public opinion. Pajnik's work did not look solely at public opinion and perceptions of human trafficking, but instead used the media frames as means to measure public opinion. Previous qualitative research was also performed in Benin City in South-South Nigeria, to determine the attitudes and knowledge levels of young women in the city about human trafficking (Okonofua et. Al, 2004), as Benin City is one of the regions with highest rate of women trafficked for international

sex or labor in the world. The study found the gaps in awareness about trafficking in young women in Benin City, but it did not address opinion of general public of human trafficking survivors (Okonofua et. Al, 2004). Similar research performed in Russia (Tverdova, 2011) used a mass survey for quantitative measures to examine participants' opinions on how widespread human trafficking was, and the efficacy of the state in addressing the social problem, but it also did not address public opinion or perceptions of survivors. In summary, even though there is research that was performed about public perceptions of trafficking, there has been no research done about the stigma and perceptions surrounding sex trafficking survivors and why those opinions exist, in the general public or specifically among students (who are pursuing higher level education). With regards to the Midwest, Ohio, and Columbus, there is no literature available as to public opinions and perceptions or as to college student opinions and perceptions, though a definite lack of knowledge of human trafficking has been observed across the Midwest (Wilson and Dalton, 2008). In other words, there is a need in both Columbus and in the Midwest (and even across the globe) to quantify public opinions and perceptions of human trafficking survivors (specifically sex trafficking survivors), in order to find gaps in knowledge and to improve educational programs and awareness campaigns in the Columbus area and at the Ohio State University, if not also Ohio and the Midwest.

Measurement of Stigma

Research focused on measuring the stigma associated with medical conditions such as HIV has increased in the last several decades. For instance, researchers have studied in depth the discrimination faced by those with HIV and AIDS living in South Africa, and found that there was a massive negative stigma and discrimination faced by the population that poorly impact

their health, work, and family life and also limited the amount that they accessed health care (Dos Santos et. Al, 2014). Those researchers also concluded that results of studying stigma can then be used to form and/or alter intervention and education measures in a way that can begin to eradicate the stigma (Dos Santos et. Al, 2014). Within the United States, a recent study was performed which examined health-related stigma, ways that those stigma could be measured (different constructs), the impact that those stigma had on the target population, and whether or not a generic way for measuring health-related stigma could be created (Van Brakel, 2006). The results of the research determined that the impact of various negative stigmas was incredibly similar on those living with each of the medical conditions despite differences in health care systems, medical conditions, and societies. In short, many condition-specific measurements for tracking the stigma related to each condition exist, but the study performed by Van Brakel (2006) found that it could be possible to develop a mass, quantitative, generic measure for stigma for health-related conditions in the future. Furthermore, some of the scales utilized by researchers to measure these health-related stigma, (including mass, quantitative measures) have the potential to be used to examine stigma related to other health or social problems, such as sex trafficking.

Scale for Perceptions of Survivors

One current scale that is available to assess attitudes of individuals toward sex trafficking survivors was formulated by Houston-Kolnik, Wilson, and Todd (2016) in their research to quantify public and student perceptions of sex trafficking. The researchers were attempting to create a quantitative survey to measure mass public opinion on human trafficking survivors within the American public and American college students, as almost all of

the information currently available about public opinions and perceptions surrounding sex trafficking are qualitative, international studies. The scale created by Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson (2016) was created specifically to quantify attitudes of participants toward survivors of sex trafficking, and features Likert scale questions surrounding six topics: knowledge of sex trafficking, awareness of sex trafficking, attitudes toward survivors' ability to leave their situation, attitudes toward helping survivors, empathic reactions toward sex trafficking, and efficacy to reduce sex trafficking. The scale was tested for validity and reliability using a population pool of psychology students at DePaul University, and the results of the preliminary test demonstrated that the scale holds convergent validity and shows promise as a tool to be used to assess attitudes of participants in research toward human trafficking survivors in the future. This tool, along with demographic questions and questions based off of HIV stigma questionnaires, have been utilized during this study to examine the perceptions surrounding sex trafficking survivors by students at Ohio State.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Theory is defined as “interrelated sets of concepts and propositions, organized into a deductive system to explain relationships about certain aspects of the world” and social work theories focus on “human growth and development, psychological and social functioning, and social service delivery”, both at the macro and micro level (Robbins et. Al, 2011). Social learning theory is a theory developed by Albert Bandura that states that humans learn behaviors by interacting with other humans and with their environment. Specifically, social learning theory indicates that humans learn new behaviors by observing and imitating others, and that learning

is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context, either through observation or even instruction (Robbins et. Al, 2011). Social learning theory is the basis for asking participants demographic questions to explore whether or not their attitude toward sex trafficking survivors is influenced by any demographic variables surrounding their culture and the way that they grew up. It is also the basis for asking participants how they learned about sex trafficking.

Tripartite Model of Attitude Assessment

The tripartite model of attitude assessment was utilized by researchers when crafting a scale used to assess attitudes of participants toward human trafficking survivors (Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson, 2016). Attitude is defined as a response to a stimulus or object, and it can be divided into three components - affect, behavior, and cognition (Breckler, 1984). Affect, the first construct, is the “feeling” portion of attitude, or the “emotional response to beliefs or behavior” (Houston-Kolnik et. Al, 2016). Likewise, behavior (action) focuses on both actions and the intent of actions (the actions the participant feels is appropriate when reacting to the stimulus). The third construct of attitude, cognition, focuses on knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of the stimuli or object, or the “knowing” part of attitude (Houston-Kolnik et. Al, 2016). Formed off of strong theoretical framework, the tripartite model of attitude assessment is the basis for the sex trafficking attitudes scale, which hits on each of the three components of attitude using six Likert scale questions.

Methodology

Research Methods

The variable in question was the perceptions of the participants about human trafficking survivors, primarily measured through scale or percentage questions, with room allowed for

those taking the survey to elaborate on their answers (which contributed to the interpretation of the results of the data). Both of these types of answers allowed for the variable to be explored in a more holistic way. The approach that was used to measure the variable was an online survey, with the aim of the results of the data analysis to provide descriptive statistics with interpretation from the extended response questions. The instrument used to measure the variables was a survey scale, adapted by the researcher from the measurement tool created by Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson (2016) in prior research and from other literature concerning the measurement of stigma associated with those living with HIV (Brady et. Al, 2012). Contact with potential participants for the survey was initiated through online recruitment materials, emails, online newsletters and social media (Facebook) groups. The participants then went through an informed consent process to take the survey. The survey given to the participants included questions that prompted the participant to reply on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree, along with other similar questions that could later be coded into quantitative data. At the end of the survey there were a few extended response questions to give participants room to expand on their previous answers. This approach was used out of necessity, as there were few instruments found in literature searches that address stigma and human trafficking survivors and also because this approach allowed for the results of the surveys to be coded into numerical data and then analyzed descriptively and for correlation. Participants who took the survey ended their interaction with researchers after they completed the online survey. The surveys were analyzed by the researcher, with no further participant involvement necessary.

The research methods were developed with ethical considerations in mind. Instead of speaking to human trafficking survivors about their experiences and how they felt they were stigmatized by those around them, the surveys were given to those outside of the population in question. This method allowed for the researcher to avoid any ethical dilemmas that might have resulted from interviewing survivors or sharing their experiences through research. Almost all of the ethical considerations that came into play within the research were those concerning researcher bias as the results are analyzed and presented, and the prevention of any bias influencing interpretation of the results of the surveys.

Sample Description

The study design was cross sectional and based on a one-time online survey. Participants were recruited through online recruitment by emailing student organizations from Ohio State, emailing social work students at Ohio State, placing a highlight in the College of Social Work's weekly newsletter, messages to classmates through Ohio State's online classroom resource (Carmen Canvas) and by recruitment through messaging student organization groups on Facebook. Participant retention was not an issue in this study, as the study design was cross sectional.

To participate in the survey, each participant had to read and agree to a consent script to ensure that a) they stated that they were taking part in the survey by their own choice and b) they knew that they could choose to leave or stop participating at any time without consequences. Only students of age 18 years or older were eligible for participation. As far as cultural competence, the way that the surveys were phrased and set up were user-friendly to

those of different cultures as proved by Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson (2016), so that regardless of a person's background, they were able to take the survey.

Data Collection

This study used a quantitative research approach to collect and analyze data. To quantify attitude, the primary instrument utilized was an online survey discerning the attitude of the person towards human trafficking survivors. For the majority of the survey, the questions were scale and rank oriented, so that the results could be numerically and statistically analyzed. However, at the end of the survey, there were several open-ended questions that sought to give those responding a chance to explain their response and why they viewed sex trafficking and sex trafficking survivors the way that they did. These questions were evaluated and used to interpret the quantitative data. All of the questions, regardless of construct, were focused on determining the attitude of each participant toward human trafficking survivors, to get a sense of the stigmas faced by the survivors from the student population. By asking both multiple choice and open-ended questions, the data from the surveys offered a well-rounded view of the topic.

A quantitative approach was the best approach for the aims of this research, because it allowed for both quantitative measurements to be taken and analyzed mathematically for statistical significance, but it also allowed for open-ended responses to give some indication to the researcher as to how to interpret the answers given. Even more so, the online survey with multiple styles of questions offered primarily numerical options for participants to express thoughts and opinions, but then allowed for the person taking the survey to explain their answers. In short, the mix of quantitative data and open-ended questions gave the researcher a

chance to analyze the data in a primarily quantitative and statistic-focused manner, but will gave room for interpretations of the data through the answers on the open-ended questions. Allowing for only quantitative or only open-ended questions would prevent for the dual interpretations of the results and therefore give a more narrow view of the issue in question.

Measurement Tool

The measurement tool utilized for this study was an online survey created on Qualtrics, partially composed of questions developed by the researcher to assess sample demographics and bias, and partially composed of an attitude scale developed by other researchers (Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson, 2016). The demographic questions for each participant featured the college in which the participant is enrolled, the decade in which the participant was born, the political party that the participant most identifies with, the environment in which the participant grew up (urban, rural, suburban) and the participant's ethnicity. The bias questions were drawn from literature focused on the stigma surrounding those living with HIV (Brady et. Al, 2012), and within the survey these questions served to examine the opinions of each of the participants in regards interacting with and working with survivors of sex trafficking. In addition, a scale developed by Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson (2016) to assess attitudes on sex trafficking was incorporated into the survey as well. The scale featured six Likert Scale Questions (questions 6-11 on the survey) and it is one of the only scales that has been developed to measure attitudes within a population concerning sex trafficking survivors. Each of the six questions has a different focus, including knowledge about sex trafficking (cognition), awareness of sex trafficking (cognition), attitudes toward a survivor's ability to leave sex trafficking (behavior), attitudes toward helping survivors (behavior), empathic reactions toward

sex trafficking survivors (affect), and efficacy to reduce sex trafficking (affect). The focus of the online survey is to focus is to quantify perception of the population toward sex trafficking and sex trafficking survivors as accurately and thoroughly as possible.

Internal Validity

The research methods proposed were not experimental – the data that was collected was analyzed primarily through descriptive statistics, with the exception of cross tabulation for correlation. Because the methods of this study were not experimental, the primary concern with internal validity was to ensure that the scale used to collect data was providing accurate measurements of the variables in question. The survey was created by referencing the surveys from other accredited, peer-reviewed studies that were used to measure stigma associated with HIV/AIDS survivors and other social issues, and adapted from a measure used in a previous research study by Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson (2016), which was created, reviewed, and edited by several accredited authors and developed specifically for the collegiate student population.

Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, the data was analyzed through a quantitative approach. For all of the Likert scale questions, the data was encoded, and then processed quantitatively along with the other multiple choice questions. The survey had six Likert scale questions that allowed for the participant to pick a point on a range as to how they feel about a given statement (e.g., strongly disagree to strongly agree and several points in between). The answers were then be coded, with answers in the “disagree” category coded negatively, answers in the “agree” category coded positively, to show the strength and range of opinion, and overall averages of

“agree” and “disagree” for each statement on the scale. Answers to each of the questions were also coded all positively (numbers 1-6, with 1 associated with “strongly disagree” and 6 associated with “strongly agree” to analyze the range of opinions on each statement, find average answers for each statement and each category, and to measure variances and standard deviation based on the schools each of the participants were enrolled in within the Ohio State University. As previously mentioned, the extended response explanations of multiple choice answers were examined to explore why people may have answered the way that they did, and to use that information to help interpret quantitative data. Outside of the Likert scales, the other bias questions were analyzed alongside the participants’ demographic information to test for correlation by calculating the Chi square value, degrees of freedom, and p-values (t-test for significance) for each through cross tabulation. The extended response questions were also used to determine where participants were gaining knowledge about sex trafficking. The data analysis was primarily descriptive, as the aim of the project was to measure the attitudes of college students at Ohio State University about those who have survived sex trafficking.

Results

The results of the data were first analyzed for the sample population’s demographics and for average responses to the attitude questions. There were five primary demographic questions for participants: decade of birth, college enrolled, political affiliation, environment where the participants grew up (urban, rural, or suburban), and the ethnicity of the participant. In four of the five demographic categories, the participants showed strong trends. Approximately half (53.85%) of the participants were enrolled either in the school of social work or the school of social and behavioral sciences, and 82.83% of the students who took the

survey identified their ethnicity as European American. Likewise, 60.98% of participants came from a suburban background, and 81.25% were born in 1990 or after. The fifth demographic area, which showed quite a bit of variance compared to the others, was political affiliation: 19.51% of participants identified as republican, 39.01% identified as democrat, approximately 24.39% identified as independent and 17.07% identified as “other.” Outside of demographics, the participant responses to the six Likert scale questions and participant answers to the other multiple choice questions were coded and then examined for average responses of participants. Of the survey participants, an average of 98.69% of participants indicated that they had at least some knowledge about sex trafficking, 87.49% of participants felt that survivors did not choose to be trafficked, and 84.46% of participants indicated they were informed about sex trafficking through anti-trafficking organizations or the media. Additionally, 64.93% of participants also reported strong emotional reactions to trafficking, and 85.66% felt that they had the ability to assist survivors or make a difference in combatting sex trafficking. 89.66% of participants indicated that they would interact with sex trafficking survivors as well.

The data for each Likert Scale question was then broken down further and studied in depth for the average responses of the participants, and the strength of participant responses to each question. The average scores for each of the six Likert Scale questions can be found in Figure 1, with a visual representation of the same data presented in Figure 2. The most variance in responses came in questions 8, 9, and 10, which examined attitudes toward the ability of a sex trafficking survivor to leave their situation, attitudes toward helping survivors of sex trafficking, and empathic response toward trafficking, respectively. Question 6, which examined the amount of knowledge participants felt they had about sex trafficking, had the least amount

of variance of all six of the questions. Questions 7 and 11, which dealt with efficacy of helping survivors and the amount of awareness each participant felt they had, respectively, also had little variance in participant response, even when the strength of each of the responses was taken into account. Studying the results of the Likert Scales in depth gave a much more holistic view of the spread of the attitudes of participants for each of the six constructs presented in the Likert Scales.

Cross tabulations for correlation were completed with multiple choice bias questions and each of the five demographic questions, to see if there was any relationship between the answers of participants on each of these two sections of the survey. A t test for significance was calculated when comparing the answers for each of the bias questions to each of the five demographic questions. The P values of each of the demographic questions when paired with the multiple choice bias questions were high: 0.61 for the school participants were enrolled in, 0.58 for the ethnicity of participants, 0.62 for the ethnicity of participants, for the decade of birth of participants, and 0.69 for the environment in which the participant grew up (see Figures 3, 4, and 8 for complete results). Based off of the high p values, the conclusion was drawn that there was no significant relationships between the demographics of the participants and their answers to the multiple choice questions assessing their bias. Further research and repeated testing with a much larger and more diverse population is recommended to reassess trends within a different population.

The data from each of the six Likert scale questions were also analyzed based on the school within the Ohio State University that the participant was enrolled in, to examine the average answers of participants from each school as well as the variance and standard

deviation for each school. The seven options for schools for the participants included 1) the college of engineering and the school of architecture, 2) college of arts and sciences, 3) the school of business, 4) the college of social work or the college of social and behavioral sciences, 5) the colleges of nursing or health and rehabilitation sciences, 6) the colleges of public affairs or public health, and 7) any other school within the Ohio State University. Full results for the data for each of the schools is featured in Figure 5 (table of average standard deviation for each school for each Likert Scale question), Figure 6 (a visual representation of the table presented in Figure 5), and Figure 7 (table of average standard deviation by school as well as the percentages of participants from each school). There were no participants from any majors within the schools of business, public affairs, or public health. The results from participants within both the school of engineering and the school of architecture, on average, deviated from the mean quite a bit more than any other school (average standard deviation was 0.608). Each of the other schools had an average standard deviation between 0.3 and 0.4 (see Figure 7). However, it should be noted that 53.85% of participants were enrolled in both the school of social work or the school of social and behavioral sciences, which impacts both the measure of mean and the calculation of variance and standard deviation.

Discussion

While the sample population was diverse in political affiliation, there were significant similarities between students in each of the other demographic categories, which indicates that the data cannot be generalized to the overall student population at Ohio State. The population as a whole demonstrated heavy trends toward a suburban background, European American ethnicity, enrollment within the school of social work or the school of social and behavioral

sciences, and birthdates between 1990 and 2000. In the future, adjustments to recruitment methods are recommended to make the sample population more representative of the entire student body at Ohio State and to avoid participant bias through self-selected participation. With regards to attitudes and perceptions, almost all of the participants felt that they were knowledgeable about sex trafficking, the vast majority of participants (89.66%) indicated that they would interact with trafficking survivors, and 87.49% acknowledged that survivors did not choose to be trafficking. In short, most of the participants had basic knowledge of sex trafficking, the ways that sex trafficking differs from prostitution, and that survivors of sex trafficking are not at fault for their experiences (as indicated by extended response questions). A significant percentage of the students (approximately 85%) stated that they were educated about sex trafficking through local anti-trafficking organizations, collegiate courses, or the media, which demonstrated that media and anti-trafficking organizations have the potential to be powerful partners in combatting trafficking as well as influencing student perceptions of sex trafficking and in helping students to feel empowered to make a difference in eradicating sex trafficking in both the Columbus area and other parts of Ohio. In terms of strength of emotional reactions by students to trafficking, there was quite a bit more variance across all responses, which suggested that the knowledge of participants and their emotional reaction are not necessarily connected.

Examining the percentages and strength of answers for each of the Likert Scale questions (including knowledge about sex trafficking, awareness of sex trafficking, attitudes toward a survivor's ability to leave sex trafficking, attitudes toward helping survivors, empathic reactions toward sex trafficking survivors, and efficacy to reduce sex trafficking) gave a better

sense of the spread of attitudes and opinions of participants, and areas of negative attitude and false perceptions where further education would be beneficial for students (such as targeting the schools of engineering and architecture for education about sex trafficking). Of the three components of attitude represented in the Likert scale questions (cognition, behavior, and affect), cognition was the construct that varied the least between participants, and behavior was the construct that varied the most by far. The amount of variance within the behavioral construct of attitude in participants also served as an indication as of where student perceptions of sex trafficking survivors could be positively influence by further education. The population studied was also confident in their baseline knowledge and awareness (cognition) of sex trafficking as a social issue, as well as their ability to have impact in the fight against sex trafficking, which indicated that improvement of awareness campaigns and educational programs might potentially include shifting the focus of the information from general information about trafficking and its prevalence to specific topics that hit on each of the behavioral constructs observed in this research (such as the risk factors for a person to become trafficked, some reasons why survivors are not at fault for being trafficked, and the best ways to help someone who has been trafficked). Again, further research with a larger and more diverse sample is recommended to determine if the current trends in data are representative of the entire student body at Ohio State.

When the answers to the Likert Scale were analyzed based off of the college each participant was enrolled in, the results of the analysis demonstrated both some variance in answers between participants of each of the schools and as well as gaps in recruitment methods for the study. There were no participants from the school of public affairs, school of

business, or school of public health, which shows that recruitment methods could be improved in the future to recruit participants from those schools in addition to participants from the other schools. The school of architecture and school of engineering had the largest deviation from the mean - the answers of the participants from those schools, on average, were further away from the mean score on each of the questions than participants from any other school. However, approximately half of the participant population was enrolled in either the school of social work or the school of social and behavioral sciences, and so measurements using the mean (including average, variance, and standard deviation) were somewhat skewed due to participant bias. For measurements of the mean to accurately represent the student population at Ohio State, a sample of students with a much more diversity in majors and schools of enrollment within Ohio State would be necessary. Future plans for research include the addition of a multitude of demographic questions to the survey as well as further analysis of the data for variance and deviation based on participant answers to each of the Likert Scale questions and bias questions, to examine perceptions in the hopes of finding ways to improve student awareness and the quality of education provided to students in regards to sex trafficking. The cross tabulation and significance testing for correlation between the multiple choice bias questions and demographic information of participants also resulted in no significant patterns or correlations. As previously stated, further studies with college students is recommended to see if current data trends hold in a more diverse population of students.

Conclusions

Implications

In summary, the data and results provide insight into the perceptions of students about sex trafficking and the means through which students have been informed of sex trafficking. This data can be used to improve education and awareness about sex trafficking on Ohio State's campus in the future. Improving awareness and education are the first steps toward eliminating false perceptions of human trafficking survivors and to reducing bias, stigma and discrimination that survivors face as they reintegrate into society. Increasing awareness and education among students can then increase the education and awareness in the general public. And the more informed and aware that both students and the public are about sex trafficking and the experiences of survivors, the more that both stigma about survivors and sex trafficking can be combatted.

Limitations

There are various limitations to the results of this research that impact both the internal and external validity of the results. The survey formed by researchers Houston-Kolnik, Todd, and Wilson (2016) to quantify participant attitude and bias has only been partially validated as an accurate scale for examining attitude and bias, and the survey tool used for this research examined only five demographic categories. Further adjustments to the survey used for this research are necessary both to provide a more holistic view of the participants' background and to validate the survey as a measure for attitude and bias. Due to the nature of the recruitment, response bias was created due to participant self-selection as well. A significant portion of the students who participated in the study were enrolled in majors within the college of social work or the college of social and behavioral sciences, which in turn makes the results of the research not easily generalized to the rest of the Ohio State student body. In addition, the survey taken

by participants was an online survey, which may have limited access and availability for some students, and may have limited some of the benefits that participants would have had if they had taken the survey in person (such as the ability to ask clarifying questions and the ability to take the survey without having to navigate the online software). In summary, further research with more extensive recruitment measures and the validation of the survey scale as a measure of attitude is recommended moving forward.

Recommendations

For future examination of the attitudes of college students toward human trafficking survivors, there are many ways to expand and to improve upon this study. As previously mentioned, there is an opportunity to pursue further research with a much larger and more diverse population even at the Ohio State University, and potentially with other colleges across the country as well. Adjustments and additional questions to the survey can allow for more in-depth analysis of the data and more exploration into potential correlations between demographics and bias. Outside of future exploration on this topic, the results of the survey can be examined and used to improve education and awareness campaigns by providing information as to widespread gaps in public knowledge of human trafficking and the ways in which people have learned about human trafficking. Continuing to address false perceptions and increase public knowledge is vital in combatting both sex trafficking and combatting the stigma and discrimination that survivors so often face as they begin to recover and reintegrate back into society.

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Appendices

Figure 1: Table of Average Responses by Question

Avg Score (%)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Question 6	0.86206897	0	0.44642857	2.23412284	8.95832297	87.4990567
Question 7	45.8412698	26.4978355	6.05772006	6.74025974	4.01443001	11.5757576
Question 8	10.4033544	8.1338684	8.52263419	15.9729836	20.6947836	36.2723759
Question 9	23.0117517	20.52005	21.826001	17.4222876	11.3688875	5.85102224
Question 10	33.7710438	6.59307359	3.59631423	9.33524511	14.0346157	32.6697076
Question 11	3.47984679	3.94166945	6.92159973	27.7649349	35.0586019	22.8333472

Figure 2: Graph of Average Responses by Question

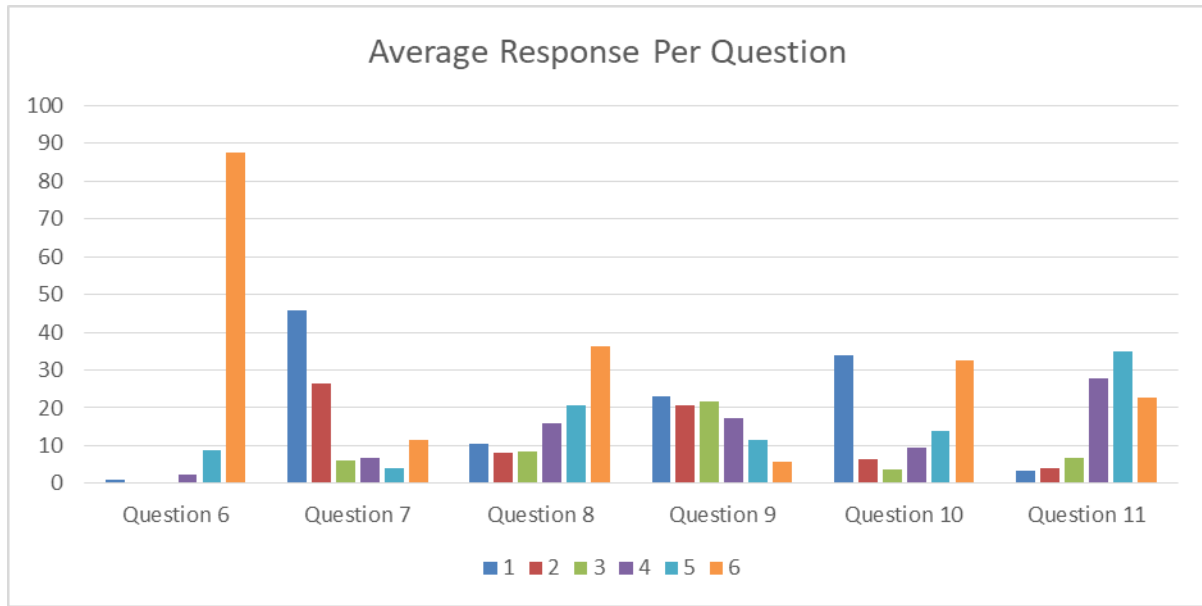


Figure 3: Cross Tabulation for Correlation (1)

Thesis Stigma Measurement Correlation Cross Tabulation(1)

		In which decade were you born?						Which option best describes the environment in which you grew up?			
		1990-2000	1980-1989	1970-1979	1960-1969	Before 1960	Total	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Total
In your opinion, if a coworker had become a victim and survivor of human trafficking, should they...	Yes	40	6	2	0	1	49	3	9	21	33
	No	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	2
	Maybe	6	1	0	0	0	7	1	1	3	5
	Total	47	7	3	0	1	58	4	11	25	40
Would knowing that a person is a human trafficking survivor keep you from interacting with that p...	Yes	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1
	No	44	5	2	0	1	52	3	11	22	36
	Maybe	2	1	1	0	0	4	1	0	2	3
	Total	47	7	3	0	1	58	4	11	25	40

		In which decade were you born?	Which option best describes the environment in which you grew up?
In your opinion, if a coworker had become a victim and survivor of human trafficking, should they...	Chi Square	8.96*	1.28*
	Degrees of Freedom	8	4
	p-value	0.35	0.87

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

		In which decade were you born?	Which option best describes the environment in which you grew up?
Would knowing that a person is a human trafficking survivor keep you from interacting with that p...	Chi Square	7.43*	3.50*
	Degrees of Freedom	8	4
	p-value	0.49	0.51

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Figure 4: Cross Tabulation for Correlation (2)

Thesis Stigma Measurement Correlation Cross Tabulation(2)

		Which racial/ethnic group do you feel that you most identify with?									Which option best describes your political affiliation?				
		European American	African American	Native American and/or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander	Asian American	Hispanic or Latino	Middle Eastern	Two or more races/ethnicities	Another group	Total	Republican	Democratic	Independent	Other
Which population(s) do you feel is most at risk for being trafficked?	Click to write Choice 1	8	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	12	3	6	1	2
	Click to write Choice 2	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	8	3	4	1	0
	Click to write Choice 3	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	2	1	1
	Click to write Choice 4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	2	0	0
	Total	11	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	16	3	9	2	2
In your opinion, if a coworker had become a victim and survivor of human trafficking, should they...	Yes	29	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	33	7	13	8	5
	No	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	0
	Maybe	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	1	2
	Total	33	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	2	40	7	16	10	7
Would knowing that a person is a human trafficking survivor keep you from interacting with that p...	Yes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	No	31	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	36	6	15	10	5
	Maybe	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	1
	Total	33	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	2	40	7	16	10	7

		Which racial/ethnic group do you feel that you most identify with?	Which option best describes your political affiliation?
Which population(s) do you feel is most at risk for being trafficked?	Chi Square	5.41*	5.06*
	Degrees of Freedom	24	9
	p-value	1.00	0.83

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

		Which racial/ethnic group do you feel that you most identify with?	Which option best describes your political affiliation?
In your opinion, if a coworker had become a victim and survivor of human trafficking, should they...	Chi Square	17.78*	4.00*
	Degrees of Freedom	16	6
	p-value	0.34	0.88

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

		Which racial/ethnic group do you feel that you most identify with?	Which option best describes your political affiliation?
Would knowing that a person is a human trafficking survivor keep you from interacting with that p...	Chi Square	16.57*	6.78*
	Degrees of Freedom	16	6
	p-value	0.41	0.34

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Figure 5: Table of Average Standard Deviation by Question

Standard							
Deviation	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5	College 6	College 7
Question 6	0.10946889	0.15484929	0	0.04338825	0.25923801	0	0.19076199
Question 7	0.61528139	0.70109957	0	0.16926407	0.62890043	0	0.3904329
Question 8	0.52992417	0.40792417	0	0.08628636	0.26441539	0	0.25494171
Question 9	0.87745847	0.37587486	0	0.73502909	0.51169576	0	0.64497091
Question 10	0.57817159	0.16521824	0	0.25382841	0.35212471	0	0.25478438
Question 11	0.93934207	0.47684207	0	0.63019183	0.33804897	0	0.41730817

Figure 6: Graph of Average Standard Deviation by Question

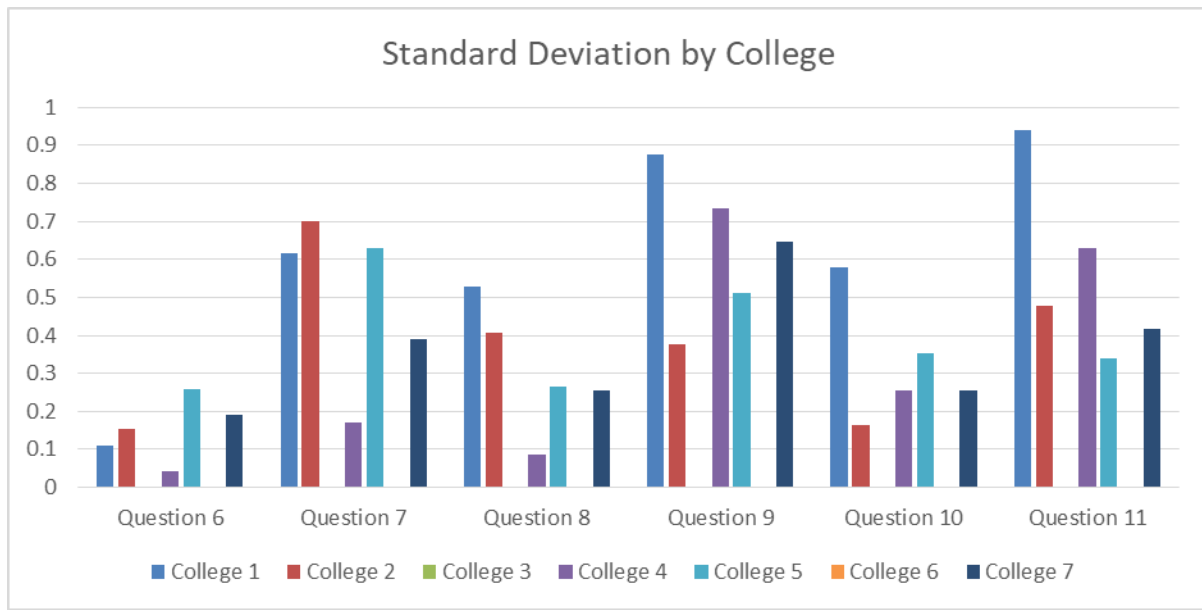


Figure 7: Table of Participants and Average Standard Deviation by School

College and Designated Number	Percentage of Participants	Average Standard Deviation
Engineering and Architecture (1)	7.69%	0.608
Arts and Sciences (2)	15.38%	0.380
Business (3)	0%	No data available
Social Work or Social and Behavioral Sciences	53.85%	0.319
Nursing or Health and Rehabilitation	7.69%	0.392
Public Affairs or Public Health (6)	0%	No data available
Other (7)	15.38%	0.359

Figure 8: Cross Tabulation for Correlation (3)

Thesis Stigma Measurement Correlation Cross Tabulation(3)

		In which college within the Ohio State University are you enrolled?							Total
		College of Engineering or School of Architecture	College of Arts and Sciences	School of Business	College of Social Work or Social/Behavioral Sciences	College of Nursing or College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences	College of Public Affairs or College of Public Health	Other	
Which population(s) do you feel is most at risk for being trafficked?	Click to write Choice 1	0	1	0	8	1	1	2	13
	Click to write Choice 2	0	2	0	1	2	1	2	8
	Click to write Choice 3	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	5
	Click to write Choice 4	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
	Total	0	3	0	9	2	1	2	17
In your opinion, if a coworker had become a victim and survivor of human trafficking, should they...	Yes	3	5	0	19	3	1	5	26
	No	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	Maybe	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
	Total	3	7	0	22	4	1	6	43
Would knowing that a person is a human trafficking survivor keep you from interacting with that p...	Yes	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
	No	2	5	0	20	4	1	6	38
	Maybe	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
	Total	3	7	0	22	4	1	6	43

		In which college within the Ohio State University are you enrolled?
Which population(s) do you feel is most at risk for being trafficked?	Chi Square	18.34*
	Degrees of Freedom	18
	p-value	0.43

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

		In which college within the Ohio State University are you enrolled?
In your opinion, if a coworker had become a victim and survivor of human trafficking, should they...	Chi Square	10.70*
	Degrees of Freedom	12
	p-value	0.86

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

		In which college within the Ohio State University are you enrolled?
Would knowing that a person is a human trafficking survivor keep you from interacting with that p...	Chi Square	7.10*
	Degrees of Freedom	12
	p-value	0.86

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.